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ABSTRACT

An effective supervisor is one who is skilled in human relationships and who is sensitive to the needs of teachers, students, and the public. Fair and accurate methods of evaluating teachers under them are essential. Supervisors should be committed to the theory that teachers can improve if they want to, and they should empathize with a teacher's feeling of nervousness while being evaluated. Before an evaluation, the supervisor and teacher should sit down together and discuss the process. Following the supervised period of teaching, they should meet again to discuss the observations. Finally, a successful supervisor should be able to deal frankly with a recalcitrant or lazy teacher. (Author/LD)

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KEYS TO HEALTHY SUPERVISION

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"A leader is best
When people barely know that he exists,
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,
Worst when they despise him.
'Fail to honor people
They fail to honor you';
But of a good leader, who talks little
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will all say, 'We did this ourselves.'"

Witter Bynner, THE WAY OF LIFE ACCORDING TO LAOTZU, AN AMERICAN VERSION, The John Day Company, New York, 1944, pp. 34-35.

Perhaps the most important key to effective supervision is the selection of the person who is to become the supervisor. A supervisor of necessity must be a person skilled in human relationships and a warm and understanding individual. Regardless of how informed the person may be in educational processes, if personal and professional relationships cannot be established

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between the supervisor and the teacher being supervised, all the technical knowledge is for nothing. Not only must a supervisor be sensitive to the needs of teachers but to the students and all with whom the supervisor comes in contact.

Domination by an evaluator or supervisor is one of the surest ways to affect morale of a school staff. If morale is low, then learning is not at the maximum level. Improvement of instruction or learning is the whole reason for being of supervision. Teachers by and large want a sense of achievement from their work, and this feeling must be fostered by the supervisor. As early as 1950, Giles realized that the supervisor must recognize and respect the need for security that exists in teachers.

Given the present emphasis and clamor for accountability of teachers by administrators, parents and business world, there is a growing need to develop strategies that will allow for fair and accurate supervision and evaluation of teachers. There are several reasons for the sudden rise in the call for accountability of teachers. One is that with the increase of unionism among teachers, with its resulting increases in pay and other increments, administrators are taking a hard look at the results of teaching that are being obtained. Another reason for the hard look at teacher performance is the fact that too many tests have shown over the past ten years that students simply are not learning the most basic information and skills that traditionally have been expected of our high school graduates. The latest indictment of our schools has come from Army combat officers.

The officers say a high educational level is essential for the modern Army because weapons are increasingly sophisticated and military tactics are more complicated than ever before. Commanders say basic academic skills of recruits as so low that the Army must take time away from military training to teach reading and writing. Current troops must understand how to use laser-fired weapons, radios and chemical warfare. The Army experience is another example of how essential basic skills are for modern society. Without a sound command of the language and ability in arithmetic, it is virtually impossible to get a good job--or defend the country.

With these thoughts in mind, it is essential that administrators devise fair and accurate methods of evaluating and supervising the teachers for whom they are responsible. There are logical steps to follow to insure that this is done. The process is not involved but supervisors must be willing to sit down and take time to think through the sequence of evaluative methods.

An important key is for the supervisor to be committed to the theory that teachers can improve if they want to, given the most helpful feedback in the proper frame of reference, (Reavis 1976). Notice the words, "if they want to", which are an important key to changing habits or performance or even attitudes. A supervisor should be a warm and understanding individual who can empathize with the persons being observed for the purpose of evaluation and relate to their feelings of nervousness, insecurity or whatever. But if the persons do not wish to change or feel that their actions are correct in practically every area, then

that is an administrative matter with which the supervisor must be prepared to deal.

Consequently, the supervisor and the one being supervised must sit down together before the supervision takes place and decide which behaviors, attitudes, skills or decisions, will be the focus of the supervision of that particular visit. Sometimes this takes the form of an evaluation form with stated competencies that must be marked, such as "motivation", "pacing of a lesson", "selection of instructional materials", "use of various teaching techniques", "classroom control", "preparation for teaching", etc. (Mueller 1976).

Other supervision may omit a list of desired competencies but major on desired behaviors, methods, attitudes, etc. that the supervisor will be looking for whiche the class is being conducted. The supervisor in both cases should be basing the decisions on actual interactions that took place rather than on feelings, reactions of a personal nature, the supervisor's own personal biases, likes and dislikes or any other intruding extraneous matter. Regardless of the type of supervision being performed, both parties should know what is being evaluated for that particular lesson and stay with those procedures that were agreed upon before the lesson began. Anyone who has taught school for any length of time is well aware that interruptions occur constantly during the school day; fire drills, unexpected visit of a parent, a stolen wallet, a forgotten assignment, and all these must be handled immediately by the teacher regardless of whether a supervisor is present or not. But the skillful or unskillful

handling of those emergencies should not be considered a part of the evaluation for that time. If the supervisor should feel that the emergency situations were not handled correctly, then those items could be considered in a later supervised visit but only after both parties knew and understood that they would be evaluated.

Following the supervised period of teaching, the next step is the follow-up conference. At this time, the supervisor has a professional duty to be open, straight forward and disclose completely to the teacher the reactions to the observation. This analysis should be complete, touching on all the previously agreed points to be observed and frankly stating what has been observed. The teachers also should be granted time to express their thoughts about the performance. After a concensus has been arrived at, then plans for remedial action need to be discussed. The teacher should take the lead in arriving at these decisions if at all possible. The only way that teachers can steadily improve performance is by analyzing their own behaviors and methods and the results and thinking through solutions to such problems or roadblocks as they encounter. The assessment by a supervisor should only be a part of an evaluation. The teacher needs to be learning also how to analyze and assess behaviors and be able to remediate where necessary. (Graves and Croft 1976).

A final key to successful supervision rests with the supervisor's ability to deal with a recalcitrant or lazy teacher. The law of averages leads us to know that once in awhile an ineffectual teacher will be hired and this poses a different type of problem

for the supervisor. After all honest attempts have been made to improve the teaching situation, there comes a time when someone has to make a decision to terminate and often this falls upon the supervisor. This is never a pleasant situation at best and at worst, can become an antagonist verbal battle. But if a person has accepted the responsibility of becoming a supervisor, then the unpleasant sides must be faced for the sake of the harmony of the school and the personality development of the other teachers and students. Frankness seems to be the best approach and personal differences must be put aside.

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